THE PEER MENTORING TUTORIAL SYSTEM IN THE ORIENTATION STUDENT PROCESS AT HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract
Our aim in this paper is to analyze the implementation of the activities that define the Student Orientation Process in the School of Technology at the University of Extremadura during the academic year 2017-18. In this process, two different systems of tutoring coexist in parallel. On one hand, students are supervised through conventional tutoring methods through the Tutorial Action Plan offered by the School. On the other hand, they are also oriented by peer mentoring manners which are being supported by the so-called “Accomplice Project”. The main characteristic of this project is that the tutoring actions are led not only by teacher-tutors, but also by student-tutors of higher courses (they are the accomplices). The accomplices are 3rd and 4th grade students and even PhDs ones. They are involved as tutors of the new students and, at the same time, as accomplices of the teacher-tutors, achieving a link between them. After the coexistence in the School of both systems of mentoring, in this work we present how they have been implemented in detail. Also, we will extract conclusions of the activities carried out and present the impressions that tutors and students have about them.

Keywords: Orientation, tutoring, mentoring, peer mentoring.

1 INTRODUCTION
University tutoring (see [1, 3]) is emerging as an excellent resource to improve the quality of university environment as it supposes an additional element in the education of university students. This is due to the fact that the integration of the different components that intervene in the teaching-learning process suppose in themselves, stimulating components for this development.

Mentoring is understood (see [4]) as pairs of people (students, relatives or teachers) who learn from a structured interaction. In the process of tutoring, the programs of "Tutoring between equals" or "Peer tutoring" have been revealed as a fundamental strategy, because they favor cooperative learning, the process of integration of new students reducing their levels of insecurity, compensating the possible imbalance that could exist between teacher-student tutoring, and definitely the educational community cohesion.

The Student Orientation Process of the School of Technology, through the activities described in the Orientation Plan, describes and coordinates the different orientation and tutoring actions that are carried out at the Center. Specifically, in this School, the Tutorial Action Plan according to the conventional model has been fully implemented for 10 academic years. In parallel and since three academic years ago, the presence of students of higher courses who act as tutors has been put into practice. In the 2017/18 academic year, this initiative was called "Project Accomplice III" and works under the model of tutorial action between peers or equals [3]. The accomplices are students of 3rd and 4th year of degree or master's, and they have become student tutors and accomplices, both of the tutor teachers, as of the tutored students, to achieve a link between both. Thus, the "Accomplices" students who are more experienced and with greater knowledge, help new students in their task of adapting to the university environment. The "Accomplices" are supervised by a professor acting as a "Tutor Teacher" who monitors the program in a direct manner, ensuring the development of the competencies of their students.

The dynamics of the project involves carrying out periodic meetings, prefixed in a consensus calendar in advance and prepared by the coordinator of the project that coincides with the person responsible for the Orientation Process of the Center. These meetings are of a formative and orientation nature, on the one hand; and monitoring and control of results by another.
Peer tutoring and in particular "Accomplice Project" has been revealed as a highly effective practice for integrative teaching that provides several benefits for all agents involved in the Polytechnic School. In fact, the implementation and the mentoring system being equal in parallel with the traditional one, is justified by the achieving of the following objectives:

- Guide the new students (mentored students) through the academic, social and the administrative point of view along the University environment in general, and the Technical School in particular.
- Promote with the help of the accomplices, the academic and social integration of the new students in the university life.
- Provide students with a broader perspective and skills regarding to professional and personal issues with the aim of positively influencing their future academic, personal and professional career.

Being aware that there are aspects to improve, the objectives of this work are on the one hand to present how both mentoring systems have been implemented (traditional and by peers). On the other, to analyze the results related to the implementation of both models during the 2017-18 academic year, in order to propose improvement aspects for successive courses.

2 METHODOLOGY

The activities that allowed the implementation of the Orientation Process (PAT and Accomplice III Project) during the 2017-18 academic course were of two types:

- Mentoring sessions: Individual / group interviews with the teacher-tutor in order to guide, guide and help the student on academic or professional issues.
- Conferences and workshops classified according to the students to whom they are directed: those focus on the welcome to new students (especially recommended for first-year students where information about university services is offered), mentoring and completion of studies (with activities focused on job placement and curriculum preparation).

The workshops that generated more interest were related to job orientation, sports activities, techniques to deal with anxiety, develop public speaking skills and information days on scholarships that students can request. Some of the workshops scheduled, were taught by the accomplices. They were the following ones:

- Professional Guidance Workshop by graduates of the Center.
- Mobility scholarships (taught by students in higher education who have participated in mobility grants)

2.1 Participants in the project

Participants in the mentoring project according to the degree to which they belong can be summarized in the following graphs.

![Number of project participants classified by degree](image-url)

*Figure 1. Number of participants in the mentoring by peers project according to the degree to which they belong*
2.2 Results

In this section, we analyse the results derived from the implementation of the mentoring project. In order to carry out it, the opinions of the participants in the project were collected through anonymous surveys carried out through forms that were sent to all the participants by email at the end of the academic year. The answers to the questions asked are summarized in the following graphs.

The participants value positively the interest of the project, especially for new students.
Regarding the suitability of the proposed activities and workshops, and how the information is transmitted to them, the participants express the following.

**3 CONCLUSIONS**

The implementation of the project has contributed to the development of skills related to social abilities that will be useful at the end of the career (values related to interpersonal relationships), development of organizational aptitudes, personal advice and leadership. In particular, the workshops developed in the project have promoted the academic, social and administrative training in the general university environment of the tutored students. They also have contributed to enhance the leadership and group work capacity of the accomplices. Definitely, the mentoring system by peers has been revealed as a dynamic system within the Student Orientation Process of the School, significantly increasing the number of students supervised with respect to previous years. It has facilitated the integration of new students by overcoming the generational and social barriers that may exist between teacher tutors and students supervised through the traditional mentoring system.
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REFERENCES